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PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

U.S. NONPROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

ATTACHABLE MAILER

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Technical Field

- [0001] The invention relates to mailers, and more particularly to a single-sheet mailer capable of being attached to a variety of different size objects including envelopes, magazines, and boxes. The mailer is also capable of being pre-printed or custom-printed in either one or two passes through a printer.

Background Of The Invention

- [0002] Continuous form webs have previously been separated into discrete forms and folded to form mailers with integral envelopes in which a sender may insert the contents they desire to mail. Such mailers have also included detachable postcards to be used as return receipts or mail receipts. These mailers, however, present two significant drawbacks. First, the sender is limited to the size of the envelope formed by the assembled mailer. Second, these constructions are typically complex in nature and time-consuming to assemble. This results in either a substantial cost in human resources to assemble and stuff such envelope mailers or a substantial investment in machinery to automate this process. This cost is compounded when the sender wishes to use a special form of mailing, such as certified mail, due to the additional fields which postal service forms require. Manual preparation of such special mail is particularly labor-intensive when large quantities of such individualized mail, e.g., mass mailings, are generated.

- [0003] Most prior art certified mailers employ a complicated construction in which various sections of the mailer seal to form an envelope. Such mailers may also include an overlaying flap containing an integrated return postcard. These prior art mailers, such as shown in U.S. Patent No. 5,901,903, however, lack flexibility in dealing with different sized contents or packages because the

mailer comprises two layers which are joined together to form an envelope that is capable of receiving contents of limited sizes. To be cost-effective, a mailer must be capable of fitting commercially available printers to either pre-print or custom-print the necessary information, such as form indicia or addresses, on each mailer and thus, eliminate the manually entry of such information. The mailer must also be adaptable to a variety of sizes, shapes, and types of contents. Prior-art envelope mailers do not satisfy this need for multi-purpose mailers.

[0004] Other prior art mailing systems attempt to solve this problem by providing a series of labels. Such labels must, however, be detached from a form and then affixed to the object to be mailed. This system is cumbersome due to the multitude of labels and time-consuming process of peeling backings off of each label and then affixing the individual labels to the object to be mailed.

[0005] It is important, therefore, to provide a mailer that the customer may efficiently apply to the object they desire to mail. Furthermore, it is desirable to provide such a mailer as a single sheet capable of being fed through a printer so that the user can customize the necessary mailing information in an efficient manner.

Summary Of The Invention

[0006] Generally, there are three categories of necessary written indicia. First, there is form indicia which, while unique to the type of mailer, does not vary in dependence upon the sender and recipient. For certified mailings, for example, certain form indicia is mandated by the United States Postal Service, such as indicia defining areas in which to enter informational items, such as recipient's and sender's address, recipient signature line, date of delivery, bar code, form number, type of service, postage, and an identifier indicating that the detachable postcard is a domestic return receipt. Form indicia is typically preprinted by the manufacturer of the mailer. Second, there is sender indicia which is unique to the sender, such as return address, bar coding, postal permit

numbers, etc. Sender indicia may be constant for a given sender or may vary depending on the specific use of the mailer made by the sender. Constant sender indicia may be preprinted on mailers in quantity by the manufacturer or others, as requested by the sender, or may be printed by the sender at the point of use. Variable sender indicia is printed on the mailer at the point of use, typically at the time of use. Third, there is recipient indicia which is unique to the specific recipient. Typically, recipient indicia varies with each individual mailer and is printed onto the mailer by the sender close in time to the mailer's use. However, if a sender routinely sends items to a particular recipient, even the recipient indicia may be preprinted. Constant recipient indicia may be preprinted on mailers in quantity by the manufacturer or others, as requested by the sender, or may be printed by the sender at the point of use. Variable recipient indicia is printed on the mailer at the point of use, typically at the time of use..

[0007]

The present invention answers the needs described above by providing a single-sheet, attachable mailer. Embodiments of the present invention may be grouped into at least two broad categories. One category includes a single sheet wherein the necessary written indicia appears on both sides of the sheet (double sided indicia). Another category includes a single sheet wherein the necessary written indicia appears on only one side of the sheet (single sided indicia). As should be readily appreciated, the double side indicia category requires two printing steps, typically such as by two passes through a printer. Whether two passes through a printer are required at the point of use depends upon whether constant sender indicia and constant recipient indicia is preprinted and whether there is variable sender indicia or variable recipient indicia.

[0008]

In both embodiments, the mailer comprises a single sheet, having inside and outside surfaces, and adhesive for affixing the mailer to an object for mailing. With either embodiment, the sender indicia and recipient indicia may, as applicable, be preprinted or added at the point of use. The mailers may be provided individually or in the form of a continuous web.

- [0009] In one embodiment, the invention comprises a mailer that comprises a sheet, capable of attachment to an object, having an inside surface which includes adhesive on a portion thereof; and an outside surface. Another embodiment of the mailer comprises a sheet having at least two panels defined by foldlines, wherein the panels comprise an inside surface, which includes at least two adhesive bands positioned laterally along the panels, at least one portion whose inside surface does not include adhesive capable of detachment from the mailer, which is capable of attachment to an object and also capable of fitting in a standard printer.
- [0010] In another embodiment, the invention comprises a mailer including a sheet having at least three panels, defined by foldlines which are frangible, wherein the panels have an inside surface which includes adhesive on a portion thereof, an outside surface, and at least one portion capable of detachment from the sheet.
- [0011] The invention also includes a method of using the mailer to effect the mailing of an object and, more particularly the mailing of an object by certified mailing.
- [0012] The mailer is capable of being fed through a standard, commercial printer, either individually or as part of a web, to allow the sender/user to add the necessary mailing information in a time and resource efficient manner. While it is preferred that the mailer be designed for commercially available printers, the mailers may be designed for use with any type of printer, including industrial printers.
- [0013] The various embodiments of the invention are capable of being assembled and/or affixed to an object to be mailed in a simple and time-efficient manner. The mailer embodiments of the invention are also capable of affixation to any object to be mailed regardless of the size and type of the object to be mailed. Although the mailers are depicted according to the one-size-fits all paradigm,

the mailers may also be designed to fit a specific size/type of object if such is required.

[0014] Various embodiments of the invention include an integrated, detachable portion that the sender may use as a receipt, coupon, return postcard or for another purpose.

[0015] Finally, the mailer embodiment of the invention is further capable of adaptation to specialized forms of mailing, such as certified mailing.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

[0016] The accompanying drawings incorporated in and forming a part of the specification illustrate several aspects of the present invention, and together with the description serve to explain the principles of the invention. In the drawings:

[0017] Figure 1 illustrates the outside surface of a single-sheet, double sided indicia, tri-fold mailer constructed according to the teachings of the present invention, with an integrated, detachable portion.

[0018] Figure 2 illustrates the inside surface of the mailer of Figure 1.

[0019] Figure 3 illustrates another embodiment according to the present invention comprising a single-sheet, double sided indicia, tri-fold mailer with an outside surface adapted for use in specialized mailings, such as certified mailings.

[0020] Figure 4 illustrates the inside surface of the mailer of Figure 3.

[0021] Figure 5 illustrates, in perspective, the application of the mailer of Figure 3 to a package.

[0022] Figure 6 illustrates, in perspective, the application of the mailer of Figure 3 to an envelope.

- [0023] Figure 7 illustrates the outside surface of a single-sheet, single sided indicia, bi-fold mailer according to the present invention.
- [0024] Figure 8 illustrates the inside surface of the mailer of Figure 7.
- [0025] Figure 9 illustrates another embodiment according to the present invention comprising a single-sheet, single sided indicia, bi-fold mailer with an outside surface adapted for use in specialized mailings, such as certified mailings.
- [0026] Figures 10-15 illustrate the assembly and application of the mailer of Figure 9 to a package.
- [0027] For the purpose of promoting an understanding of the principles of the invention, reference will now be made in detail to the present preferred embodiment of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

Detailed Description Of The Invention

- [0028] A mailer, as used in this application, shall mean a sheet configured to be capable of being affixed to an object to be mailed to a recipient, such as an envelope, magazine, package, etc.
- [0029] Referring to Figures 1 and 2, an embodiment of the mailer (10) is shown which has double sided indicia. The mailer (10) comprises a single sheet comprising a one piece integral structure. As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, the mailer (10) includes integrally formed first (top) panel (20), second (middle) (30) panel, and third (bottom) panel (40). Each panel has respective outside surfaces (20a, 30a, 40a) and inside surfaces (20b, 30b, 40b) surfaces. (As used herein, the outside surface is the surface which is visible to one handling the object to be mailed after the mailer has been affixed to that object.) The panels are defined by respective, transversely extending foldlines (25, 35). Foldlines (25, 35) may be achieved in any manner including by using tools well known in the art such as dies that indent foldlines (25, 35) or form

perforations into the sheet, or even by pre-forming the foldlines (25, 35) into the sheet during manufacture of the sheet. Foldlines (25, 35) may also merely be a location for folding which may, but not necessarily, be indicated by indicia on the mailer (10). Foldline (25) defines the interface between the top panel (20) and the middle panel (30). Foldline (35) defines the interface between the middle panel (30) and the bottom panel (40). The foldlines (25, 35) may be frangible, for example resulting from weakening the sheet at the foldlines (25, 35) such as by perforating or creasing the sheet. More particularly, as described below, the frangibility of foldline (35) allows the bottom panel (40) to be separated from the middle panel (30).

[0030]

The inside surfaces (20b, 30b) of the top and middle panels (20, 30) include adhesive (75) (see Figure 4) along the lateral edges of the top and middle panels (20, 30). Adhesive (75) may, optionally, be applied to the lateral edges of the bottom panel (40b), depending on the need. Many patterns of adhesive are possible including full mat, wide strips, laterally extending continuous strips, intermittent strips, diagonal strips, etc. In the embodiment depicted, the adhesive (75) was 1½ inches wide. If necessitated by the type of adhesive used, a protective covering (70), such as strips covering the adhesive applications or the entire sheet, may be optionally placed over the adhesive (75). In a preferred embodiment, the inside surface (40b) of the bottom panel (40) remains "clean" (no adhesive) so that the bottom panel (40) may be detached via the frangible foldline (35) and used as a receipt or for some other purpose by the sender.

[0031]

As illustrated, the top panel (20) includes an integral, detachable portion (60), comprising an outside surface (60a) and an inside surface (60b) that is peripherally defined by a frangible border (50). This portion (60), when carrying indicia indicative of a particular use, is a detachable form which may be removed and used for that use, such as a return postcard, coupon, or receipt. In other embodiments, further detachable portions may be integrated into the body of the mailer (10) for a variety of uses. While the detachable portion (60) is illustrated as a portion of top panel (20), it may be formed in any panel.

[0032] The first, second, and third panels (20, 30, 40) of the mailer (10), although depicted as equal in size, may be of different sizes and proportions. In a preferred embodiment, the mailer (10) comprises a sheet capable of being received by standard size commercial printer (without the need for special software or hardware). Standard sizes for the sheets include by way of non-limiting examples, 8 1/2" x 11", 11" x 17 and A4. Where the size of the combined panels does not equal a standard commercial printer sized sheet, tear-off strips may be incorporated into the mailer to compensate for the deficiency. The user will be able to customize the mailer (10) by feeding the mailer (10) through the printer on one side first and then completing a second pass through the printer by feeding the opposite side in second. The advantages inherent in this mailer (10), particularly with the advent of computer generated postage, allow for greater efficiency by individuals using standard equipment for mass mailings.

[0033] Certified mailing presents a unique challenge for mass mailings, particularly where the sender is not able to invest in expensive machinery to automate the process. A certified mailing requires that a number of detachable portions exist as well as special printing and color coding to comply with forms set forth by the United States Postal Service, such as PS Form 3811. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate an embodiment of the mailer (10) adapted to be used for certified mailing by imprinting the indicia necessary for certified mailing. In this embodiment, the detachable portion (60) comprises the "domestic return receipt" or "return postcard" that can be detached from the mailer (10) and sent back to the sender to indicate receipt of the mailed object. Various portions of the outside surface (60a) and inside surface (60b) are printed with form indicia, sender indicia and recipient indicia. Form indicia is diagrammatically illustrated on the outside surface (60a) and inside surface (60b), generally indicated by (55). The adhesive (75) extending along the lateral edges of the top and middle panels (20, 30) of the mailer (10) do not extend over the peripheral edges of the detachable "domestic return receipt" (60) (in the case of a certified mailing or of the detachable portion in another

type of mailing). This allows greater ease in removing the detachable portion (60) from the top panel (20) of the mailer (10).

[0034] As illustrated in Figure 3, the middle panel (30) includes indicia (46), relevant to the certified mailing. As shown, the indicia (46) may extend beyond the foldline (25). In particular, the indicia (46) identifies the mailing as Certified Mail and includes the certified mail number in bar code (a tracking bar code) and numeral form. All or a portion of the indicia (46) may be printed by the manufacturer or may be printed by the sender at the point of use. For example, a portion of the certified mail number may uniquely identify the sender and a portion may be sequential. Either portion of the indicia (46) may be printed by the manufacturer or the end user, or a combination of the two. Alternatively, the certified mail number may not include any portion which is unique to the sender, but merely a number determined by the manufacturer in accordance with United States Postal Service regulations, such as in the case of generic certified mail mailers.

[0035] The middle panel (30) also includes an area generally designated (45) for recipient indicia, more particularly the address of the recipient, also referred to herein as the recipient address label. This recipient indicia can be preprinted or printed at the point of use. As described below, when the mailer (10) is applied to an object to be mailed, the recipient address label provides the recipient's address. This eliminates the need to print and apply a separate mailing label.

[0036] As illustrated, the bottom panel (40) includes a detachable portion (42) that is peripherally defined by a frangible border (a portion of foldline 35 and 47). The detachable portion (42), when carrying indicia indicative of a particular use, is a detachable form which may be removed and used for that use. Preferably, the entirety of the foldline (35) is frangible permitting removal of the entire bottom panel (40), in which case the frangible boarder (47) may be omitted if desired. The portion (42) may comprise the "U.S. Postal Service Certified Mail Receipt", in which case it includes indicia customary therefor,

such as a header identifying the portion as a "Certified Mail Receipt," the amount of postage and fees, required endorsements, total postage fees, name, address, and barcode, arranged in the manner mandated by the United States Postal Service. An area (42') may also be provided for the United States Postal Service to postmark the certified mail receipt. The certified mail receipt (42) may be notated and removed from the mailer (10) at the time of deposit to provide a record of the mailing transaction for the sender. As illustrated diagrammatically, the indicia on portion (42) includes form indicia which can be filled in with sender indicia and recipient indicia as appropriate at the appropriate time. Printing software may be used to custom print the mailers with the necessary indicia for a certified mailing or other specialized mailing.

[0037]

Referring to Figure 4, the inside surface (10b) of the mailer (10) is shown. This remains substantially similar to the embodiment depicted in Figure 2, however, indicia on the inside surface (60b) of the detachable portion (60) necessary for a certified mailer is diagrammatically illustrated. Customary indicia for the inside surface of the "domestic return receipt" includes barcode, postage (55), and the sender's address (56) so that the recipient may send the "domestic return receipt" (60) back to the original sender, which can be preprinted or printed at the point of use. Adhesive (75) extending along the lateral edges of the top and middle panels (20, 30) of the mailer (10) do not extend over the peripheral edges of the detachable "domestic return receipt" (60) (in the case of a certified mailing or of the detachable portion in another type of mailing). This allows greater ease in removing the detachable portion (60) from the top panel (20) of the mailer (10). The portions of the first panel (20) which have the adhesive (75) act as anchor portions which secure the sheet and the detachable portion (60) to the object.

[0038]

Referring to Figures 5 and 6, an illustration of the application of the mailer (10) is provided. Prior to application, the necessary indicia must be printed on the mailer (10). Since the mailer (10) has double sided indicia, it typically must run through a printer twice. If all of the indicia on the inside (60b) of the

return receipt (60) has been preprinted by the manufacturer, then only one run through a printer will likely be required at the point of use. If there is indicia that the user needs to add to the inside (60b), such as variable sender indicia, then two runs through a printer will likely be required at the point of use.

[0039] Figure 5 illustrates the application of the mailer (10) to a package (80). If present, the protective covering (70) (not shown in Figure 5) may be removed to expose the adhesive (75) (not shown in Figure 5). Other types of adhesives may be similarly activated, such as by moistening a moisture activated adhesive. The inside surfaces (20b, 30b) (not visible in Figure 5) of top panel (20) and middle panel (30) are affixed to the package (80) with foldline (25) extending transversely across an edge of the package (80). Thus, a bond is formed between the mailer (10) and the package (80). In this orientation, the indicia (45) indicating the recipient's address is displayed appropriately. The applicable portions of the outside surface (40a) of bottom panel (40) may be filled out upon deposit at the United States Post Office and removed from the mailer (10) via the frangible, second foldline (35). The certified mail receipt (42) may be further separated from the bottom panel (40) along its frangible border (47). The remaining portion of bottom panel (40) may then be discarded and the certified mail receipt (42) kept by the sender.

[0040] Figure 6 illustrates an intermediate stage in the application of the mailer (10) to another object, such as an envelope (82). The adhesive (75) (not shown in Figure 6) is exposed by removing protective strips (70) (not shown in Figure 6). The top panel (20) and middle panel (30) may be bent along the foldline (25) thus creating a V-shaped fold. The envelope (82) may be inserted into the V-shaped fold until an edge of the envelope (84) contacts the foldline (25). The sender may complete the application by pressing the lateral edges of the top (20) and middle (30) panels, carrying adhesive (75) on the inside surfaces (20b, 30b), onto the envelope (82). In this orientation, the indicia (45) indicating the recipient's address is displayed appropriately. The detachable portion (42), in the case of a certified mailing, may be filled out at the United States Postal Office and removed as described in relation to Figure 5.

[0041] Although the detachable portion (60) is illustrated within the top panel (20) and the recipient address label in the middle panel (30), the locations may be switched. In an alternative embodiment, the bottom panel of the mailer may be omitted. If the form of the mailing does not require a receipt, the receipt can also be omitted: If a receipt (or any detachable portion for the sender to keep) is required, the receipt may be located in an appropriate, available area of the two panels, such as next to the recipient address label with an appropriate frangible boarder. Although the panels (20, 30, 40) are depicted in Figures 1-6 as equal in size, however, the panels do not have to be the same size.

[0042] In another embodiment, the mailer (10) may comprise a single sheet with no further subdivisions such as delineated by the foldlines (25, 35), yet incorporating the frangible boarders for the detachable elements. It will be understood that while the designation of the location of particular elements, such as detachable portions, adhesive, etc., has been disclosed many additional arrangements for these elements are possible.

[0043] Another embodiment for a mailer is illustrated in Figures 7-16 which has single sided indicia. More particularly, the configuration of this mailer requires indicia on only one side of the mailer in order to form portion with indicia on two sides. This results in greater efficiency because the mailer need be run through a printer by the user once rather than twice.

[0044] Referring to Figure 7, the mailer (210) comprises a single sheet. The mailer (210) comprises a top panel (220), a middle panel (230), and a bottom panel (240). A first frangible line (225) and foldline (225') defines the interface between the top panel (220) and the middle panel (230). Figure 7 depicts foldline (225') aligned with frangible line (225), being a continuation of frangible line (225). However, as its use is described below, while foldline (225') may be a frangible line, it is not required to be. A second frangible line

(235) defines the interface between the middle panel (230) and the bottom panel (240).

[0045] Referring to Figure 7, the top panel (220) is further subdivided into right and left portions (222, 224). The top-left portion (222) of the top panel (220) is defined by top and left outside edges of the sheet and is peripherally defined by a frangible border (225 and 226). The top-left portion (220) comprises a detachable, discard portion so that the initial shape of the mailer (210) may be a uniform sheet, to permit using standard printers.

[0046] The top-right portion (224) of the top panel (220) is defined by top and right outside edges of the sheet and is peripherally defined by a frangible border (225' and 226). The top-right portion (224) is further subdivided into an upper-top-right portion (224') and a lower-top-right portion (224"). The interface between the upper-top-right portion (224') and the lower-top-right portion (224") is defined by a frangible border (227) extending transversely between the outside, right edge of the right portion (224) to the frangible boarder (226).

[0047] The upper-top-right portion (224') comprises a detachable, discardable portion. The lower-top-right portion (224") comprises an anchor portion. Referring to Figure 8, the inside surface (224"b) of the lower top-right portion (224") includes an adhesive layer (228). A removable protective covering (not shown) may protect the adhesive layer. Alternatively, the top-right portion (224) may comprise the anchor portion having adhesive on its inside surface, eliminating the need for the upper-top-right discard portion (224').

[0048] Referring to Figure 7, the middle panel (230) further comprises middle-left portion (232) and middle-right portion (234). The interface between the middle-left portion 232 and the middle-right portion (234) is defined by a foldline (226'). In the embodiment depicted, the foldline (226') is aligned with frangible boarder (226), being a continuation of frangible boarder (226). However while foldline (226') may be a frangible line, it is not required to be.

- [0049] Referring to Figure 8, the inside surface (234b) of the middle-right portion (234) includes an adhesive layer (228), which is covered by a protective layer (not shown). In this embodiment, the outside surface (232a) comprises the outside surface and the outside surface (234a) comprises the inside surface of a return postcard, coupon, receipt, etc.
- [0050] The bottom panel (240) of the mailer (210) comprises bottom-left portion (242) and bottom-right portion (244). The interface between bottom-left portion (242) and bottom-right portion (244) is defined by the frangible line (247). Referring to Figure 8, the inside surface (244b) of bottom-right portion (244) further includes two horizontal strips of adhesive (228' and 228''). covered by protective strips (not shown) adjacent to the top and bottom edges of bottom-left portion (244b). The outside surface (244a) may be printed with various mailing indicia. The bottom-left portion (242) may comprise a receipt for the sender.
- [0051] Referring to Figure 9, an embodiment of the mailer (210) is illustrated wherein the mailer (210) has been adapted to be used for certified mailing. In this embodiment, top panel (220) remains the same as described in regard to Figures 7 and 8. Both the middle panel (230) and bottom panel (240) are printed with the proper form and color coding as required for certified mailing. In Figure 9, the outside surface (232a) and outside surface (234a) are printed with form indicia, sender indicia and recipient indicia as are necessary for certified mailing. Form indicia is diagrammatically illustrated on the outside surfaces (232a, 234a), generally indicated by (255). The indicia (255) is similar to the indicia (55).
- [0052] The outside surface (232a) of the middle-left portion (232) comprises form indicia and sender indicia as is customary for the inside surface of a "domestic return receipt". The outside surface (234a) of the middle-right portion (234) comprises form indicia and recipient indicia as is customary for the outside surface of a "domestic return receipt." The outside surface (244a) of the

bottom-right portion (244) includes indicia (246) relevant to the certified mailing. In particular, the indicia (246) identifies the mailing as Certified Mailing and includes the certified mail number in bar code (a tracking bar code) and numeral form. Indicia (246) is similar to indicia (46).

[0053] The bottom-right portion (244) also includes an area generally designated (245) for recipient indicia, more particularly the address of the recipient. This recipient indicia can be preprinted or printed at the point of use. As described below, when the mailer (210) is applied to an object to be mailed, indicia (245) provides the recipient's address. This eliminates the need to print and apply a separate mailing label.

[0054] The bottom left portion 242 is detachable along the frangible lines (235, 247), such that it comprises the "U.S. Postal Service Certified Mail Receipt", in which case it includes indicia customary therefor, such as a header identifying the portion as a "Certified Mail Receipt," the amount of postage and fees, required endorsements, total postage fees, name, address, and barcode, arranged in the manner mandated by the United States Postal Service. An area (242') may also be provided for the United States Postal Service to postmark the certified mail receipt. The certified mail receipt (242) may be notated and removed from the mailer (210) at the time of deposit to provide a record of the mailing transaction for the sender. As illustrated diagrammatically, the indicia on portion (242) includes form indicia which can be filled in with sender indicia and recipient indicia as appropriate at the appropriate time.

[0055] Referring to Figures 10-16, an illustration of the assembling and application of the mailer (210) is shown. Figure 10 is a perspective illustration of a complete mailer (210) adapted for use in certified mailing. Prior to use, all necessary form indicia, sender indicia and recipient indicia necessary for certified mail is printed on the mailer (210). Since mailer (210) has single sided indicia, printing is required on only one side. It is possible for all necessary indicia to be printed with only one run through a printer. However, the number of runs through a printer depends on how much of the necessary indicia is printed on

each run. Preferably, the mailer (210) is run through the user's printer only once, with all indicia not printed by the user being preprinted by the manufacturer (or other supplier to the user). It is possible for the user to print all indicia, including any colors mandated by the United States Postal Service. Another possibility is for the manufacturer to print all necessary indicia such that the mailer (210) does not have to be run through the user's printer, such as if all sender indicia and recipient indicia are constant. The manner in which the necessary indicia is printed on the mailer (210) depends on the indicia and volume required.

[0056] Referring to Figure 10, the top-left portion (222) is removed by separating along portions of the frangible lines (225, 226). The top-left portion (222) may be discarded. The upper-top-right portion (224') is also removed by separating along a portion of the frangible line (227). It will be understood that the order of this second and third step is reversible. After removal of top-left portion (222) and upper-top-right portion (224'), the mailer 210 appears as shown in Figure 11.

[0057] Referring to Figures 12 & 13, the inside surface of the mailer (210) is illustrated. Protective strips (not shown) have been removed to expose adhesive layer (228). If protective strips are not used, the adhesive layer (228) may be activated in any appropriate way. The middle-left portion (232) is folded along the foldline (226') toward the inside surface (234b) of the middle-right portion (234). Once these two portions (232, 234) are so joined by the adhesive layer (228), a domestic return receipt (236-see Figure 14) is formed, attached at its top edge to the anchor portion (224") at frangible line (225') and attached at its bottom edge to bottom-right portion (244) at frangible line (235), which functions as an anchor portion. Surfaces (232a, 234a) of middle panel (230) form the outside surfaces of the domestic return receipt (236). Thus, while prior to use all indicia is printed on a single side of the mailer (210), after such detaching and folding, the necessary indicia is on opposite sides of domestic return receipt (236).

- [0058] Referring to Figure 13 and 14, the mailer (210) may be affixed to an object (86), such as a box or an envelope, by laying the inside surface (232a) of the integrated domestic return receipt (236) on the surface (88) of the object (86) and affixing the exposed adhesive layer (228) on the inside surface (224"b) of the anchor portion (224") to the surface of the object (86). The bottom panel (244) may similarly be affixed to the object (86) by aligning foldline (235) with an edge of the object (86) and affixing the exposed adhesive strips (228', 228") located on the inside surface (244b) to the surface (88). In this orientation, the indicia (245) indicating the recipient's address is displayed appropriately. If the object (86) is large enough, the entire mailer may fit on a single surface of the object (86) and it would not be necessary to utilize the foldlines.
- [0059] The detachable portion (242) comprising the "certified mail receipt" may be notated as appropriate by the United States Post Office and detached via its remaining frangible border (247).
- [0060] Figure 15 illustrates the domestic return receipt (236) mostly detached from the rest of the mailer (210), along its frangible boarders (225', 235), as would occur upon delivery of the object (86) to the recipient.
- [0061] It will be appreciated that the basic forms of the mailers described herein may be modified to accommodate a variety of special mailings particularly mailings which require receipts or various responses from the recipient in the form of return postcards. It may also be appreciated that the dimensions and positions of all the panels described herein may comprise multiple positions and proportions. In all of the embodiments, any type of suitable adhesive may be used. In all embodiments, the mailers may be assembled individually or in the form of a continuous strip of mailers. When it is intended to be used with a printer of the type having a pin or sprocket feed, the strip of mailers may be provided with detachable, narrow feed strips as is well known in the art. When printers having a friction feed are used, the narrow perforated feed strips may be eliminated.

[0062]

Although the mailers depicted are configured to the fit all sizes, the mailers may also be designed to fit a specific size/type of object if such is required. For instance, the U.S. Post Office requires that a 5/8" clear area be provided at the bottom of an envelope to allow for bar code marking. In such an application, the size of the panels must be adjusted to comply with this regulation. In such applications, the mailer may be adapted to conform to the regulation while still maintaining a standard printing size (i.e., 8 1/2" x 11") as a whole. To wit, the top panel may be sized to 3 5/8", the middle panel may be sized to 3 7/16", and the bottom panel may be sized to 3 3/16". The remaining approximately 5/8" (necessary to make the entire sheet a standard size such as 11") may comprise a detachable, discard portion defined by a frangible border. To compensate for a shortened panel during the printing process, an additional tear-off strip may be provided on the panel that needs to be shortened prior to application to an object.

[0063]

In summary, numerous benefits have been described which result from employing the concepts of the invention. The foregoing description of an exemplary preferred embodiment to the invention has been presented for the purpose of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. Obvious modifications or variations are possible in light of the above teachings. The embodiment was selected and described in order to best illustrate the principles of the invention and its principal application to hereby enable one of ordinary skill in the art to best utilize the invention in various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. Although this invention has been described in relation to the specific application of a mailer, it will nevertheless be understood that no limitation of the scope of the invention is thereby intended toward such alterations and further modifications in the illustrated device and such further applications of the principles of the invention as illustrated therein as would normally occur to one skilled in the art to which the invention relates including, but not limited to inventory

